
SUMMARY**S.1 Project Synopsis****S.1.1 Project Location**

The proposed project is located on lands adjacent to State Route (SR) 78 and SR 79 within the Greater Julian Area, which encompasses the unincorporated area of San Diego County from north of Mesa Grande on SR 76, south of the intersection of SR 79 and Highway S2, including Volcan Mountain, to the bottom of Banner Grade on SR 78, south to Cuyamaca and west, and including Pine Hills and Santa Ysabel. SR 78 and SR 79 are the primary regional access routes connecting the eastern portions of unincorporated San Diego County to the urban areas of San Diego, and also serve as the major evacuation corridors in the event of an emergency.

S.1.2 Project Description

The County of San Diego proposes to accept a grant from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and implement a project to strategically remove selected dead, dying and diseased (DDD) trees from portions of the greater Julian area. Participants in the County's DDD tree removal program must meet the following criteria:

1. Property owners will volunteer to participate in the program, and
2. DDD trees to be removed are limited to areas within 500 feet of habitable structures and infrastructure buildings, such as communication repeater buildings, or
3. DDD trees to be removed are limited to areas within 500 feet of evacuation corridors, which are SR 78, SR 79, and roads that provide access to three or more habitable structures.

The County will focus its activities first along SR 78 and SR 79 through the Greater Julian Area, and in the community of Whispering Pines. If funding remains after treating (removing DDD trees from) the participating parcels in portions of the Greater Julian Area and Whispering Pines, DDD trees would be removed from parcels meeting the same eligibility criteria identified above from the Descanso, Guatay and Pine Valley areas, in that order, until the funds are expended. This EIR analyzes the impacts for all of the areas.

Funding for the proposed project will be provided through a grant from USFS. The proposed project is a voluntary program that would be provided at no cost to property owners. Up to 20,000 DDD trees are expected to be removed from a total of approximately 375 privately-owned parcels. The project will end when the funds are all expended or in March 2013 when the grant expires, whichever comes first.

The project will be implemented by carrying out the following steps:

- Identification of eligible parcels through a notification process.
- Marking of qualifying trees directed by a County retained Registered Professional Forester.
- Completion of a biological resources and cultural resources surveys to identify sensitive biological resources or significant archaeological or historic sites that need to be avoided.
- Removal of qualifying trees (above ground parts only, not the stumps or roots).
- Cleaning-up.

All tree removal work would follow current state and federal guidelines for safety and environmental protection.

S.1.3 Environmental Setting

The project is located in rural eastern San Diego County. Topography ranges from relatively flat, to steep lands that may exceed 25% slope, and elevations range from 2,900 feet to 4,700 feet above mean sea level (AMSL). Existing vegetation in the project area ranges from mixed coniferous forest to oak woodlands, chaparral, grassland and meadows, and riparian habitats. The region has incurred frequent large scale fires, and has been subjected to a prolonged drought with record dry conditions over the past 13 years (1997-2010). The east San Diego County area is characterized as having tree densities greater than what regional precipitation levels can support.

Land within the project area and surrounding lands support a variety of uses that range from rural residential landscapes with individual structures and houses placed on lots ranging from four to 20 acres and larger, to higher density development located in the outskirts of Julian. Some of the land is rangeland for cattle.

Additional project-specific environmental setting discussions are provided in Chapters 2.0 and 3.0 of the EIR.

S.2 Summary of Significant Effects and Mitigation Measures that Reduce or Avoid the Significant Effects

Table S-1, Summary of Significant Effects, located at the end of this chapter, provides a summary of significant environmental impacts resulting from project implementation. Table S-1 also includes mitigation measures to reduce the environmental effects, with a conclusion as to whether the impact would be mitigated to below a level of significance. Detailed analysis is provided in Chapter 2.0 of this EIR.

S.3 Areas of Controversy

Comment letters were submitted by the following organizations during the Notice of Preparation period for the EIR: the Descanso Planning Group, Camp Stevens, and the San Diego County

Archaeological Society, Inc. The complete letters are included in Appendix A. These letters addressed the following environmental issue areas: project funding sources and timeline for completion, biological resources and cultural resources. These issues have been addressed in the Draft EIR.

Comment letters that were received during the public review period for the Negative Declaration that was prepared in 2010 identified the distance from a road or structure within which DDD trees would be removed as an area of controversy.

S.4 Issues to be Resolved by the Decision-Making Body

The following issues are to be resolved by the decision-making body:

- Determine whether to accept the U.S. Forest Service grant for \$7 million for the purpose of removing dead, dying and diseased trees.
- Determine if the proposed project or any of the project alternatives should be adopted.
- Determine if mitigation measures adequately address the project-level biological resources impacts, the project-level cultural resources impacts, and the project-level noise impacts.
- Determine whether a contract should be awarded to a tree removal contractor to remove dead, dying and diseased trees in the Greater Julian Area and nearby areas according to the terms of the grant.

S.5 Project Alternatives

Alternatives were considered based upon the impact identified for the project, as well as the objectives of the project. The project objectives are to:

1. Meet the requirements of the USFS grant for the removal of dead, dying and diseased (DDD) trees within portions of the Greater Julian Area, based on the priority areas recommended by the FAST program.
2. Help to prevent DDD trees from impeding the evacuation of people and domestic animals or hindering fire access by firefighters.
3. Create defensible space along evacuation and fire access routes and around habitable structures so firefighters can more safely and effectively fight wildfires.
4. The EIR considered seven alternatives in addition to the No Project Alternative. Four of these were rejected because they did not meet the project objectives or were infeasible.

These three were analyzed in Chapter 4 of the DEIR:

- Reduced Treatment Width Alternative.
- Removing DDD Trees within 500 feet of Roadways Only Alternative.

- Removing DDD Trees Only from Strategic Locations for Firefighting Activities Alternative.

S.5.1 No Project Alternative

Under the No Project Alternative, the removal of DDD trees by the County would not occur and the existing conditions described for each issue area in Chapters 2.0 and 3.0 would generally remain the same; however, some private property owners may choose to have DDD trees removed on their own. This is not anticipated to result in the same magnitude of effects because fewer DDD trees would likely be removed because the cost associated with DDD tree removals would be borne by the property owner under this alternative.

S.5.2 Environmentally Superior Alternative

Of the No Project Alternative and the three alternatives that were analyzed, the Reduced Treatment Area Width Alternative is environmentally superior to the others.

Table S.1. Summary of Project Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Impact Number	Project Impact	Proposed Mitigation	Conclusion and Mitigation Effectiveness
<i>Potentially Significant Impacts</i>			
BI-1	Temporary indirect noise impacts to nesting special-status birds from project equipment.	<p>To mitigate indirect noise impacts from tree removal and wood debris staging site activities on actively nesting special-status birds (e.g., endangered, threatened, state fully protected, County Group A or B), a County-approved biologist shall conduct a pre-work survey of individual work areas to determine the presence of nesting special-status bird species. The pre-work survey must be conducted within 10 calendar days prior to the start of tree removal activities on any particular participating parcel and the results of these surveys must be submitted to the County.</p> <p>If pre-work surveys indicate the presence of nesting special-status bird species, noise-producing equipment shall not be operated within 500 feet of the nest until after the breeding season (January 15 – July 15) or until a County-approved biologist has determined that all young have fledged or the nest is no longer active. For active golden eagle nest sites, this buffer distance shall be 4,000 feet from the nest.</p>	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.
CU-1	Direct Impact to Previously Unknown Human Remains.	In the event that human remains are encountered during DDD tree removal activities, the activities in the immediate vicinity of the find must be halted, and the County Coroner must be contacted. If the coroner determines the remains are Native American, the coroner shall immediately contact the Native American Heritage Commission for the most likely descendant. Pursuant to the provision of Public Resources Code section 5097.98, the most likely descendant may then	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.

Impact Number	Project Impact	Proposed Mitigation	Conclusion and Mitigation Effectiveness
		make recommendations regarding the disposition of the remains.	
NO-1	Temporary direct noise impacts at wood debris staging site(s) in excess of noise ordinance standards.	<p>To mitigate direct noise impacts from wood debris staging site activities, the following items shall be incorporated into the wood debris staging site development:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Selection of wood debris staging sites that are not within 500 feet of residences, when feasible; 2) Placement of the tub grinder (the noisiest piece of equipment) as far away from adjacent sensitive receptors as possible. To meet the noise ordinance requirement of 75 decibels or less at the property line, the tub grinding/chipping operation will need to be at least 460 feet from the property line or any occupied property where the noise is being received. 3) Operation of the tub grinder shall not exceed 5 hours per day and shall be timed to occur in the middle of the day; 4) Identification of a minimum of two wood debris staging sites to alternate between every two to three months so that equipment noise at any one staging site remains temporary in nature; and 5) Temporary placement and stockpiling of wood material and chip piles in such a manner as to provide additional vertical screening for noise level reduction while maintaining compliance with State and County regulations for fire safety and wood debris clearance standards. 	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.
NO-2	Substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project.	See mitigation proposed under Impact NO-1.	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.